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'I do not tolerate discriminatory, hostile, or unfair working environments': City manager fires CFD chief



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In Chief Michael Washington's termination documentation, the city manager cites a concerning workplace culture that is unwelcome towards women. Long said that during Washington's tenure, multiple female CFD employees voiced concerns about a workplace culture that allows women to be treated unfairly and with disrespect.



By: Molly Schramm

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CINCINNATI — Cincinnati Fire Department Chief Michael Washington has been fired, City Manager Sheryl Long said in a press release.

In Washington's termination documentation, Long cites a concerning workplace culture that is unwelcome towards women.

“I want to be clear that I do not tolerate discriminatory, hostile, or unfair working environments in any city department,” said Long. “Cincinnatians place their trust in the fire department, which is tasked with keeping all of us safe. If the workplace culture within the department is unhealthy, that’s a violation of the community’s trust.”



Long said that during Washington's tenure, multiple female CFD employees voiced concerns about a workplace culture that allows women to be treated unfairly and with disrespect. Washington was allegedly ordered to deliver a climate assessment, but it was never conducted.

Women Helping Women, a social services organization, was brought in to deliver training to CFD. According to Long, both city administration and Women Helping Women were unsatisfied with Washington's implementation of the training as well as his "lack of concern about workplace issues related to women."

Long said a memo from Women Helping Women described that "the problem lies with key leadership, namely fire chief" and that "language and actions perpetuate [a] 'boys club' mentality."

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“Every employee deserves a safe and fair workplace, and we have to unequivocally reject and rectify violations of that environment,” said Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval. “I fully support City Manager Long’s decision, and we will continue to support her during our work to make CFD a healthy and welcoming place for women.”

Along with alleged failure to improve workplace culture, Long lists additional reasons for Washington's termination including his unavailability during a major apartment fire in February 2022, ignoring HR guidance, and his lack of accountability. Long said he consistently placed blame on his subordinates.

Washington has served as chief since 2021. He has spent 30 years with the Cincinnati Fire Department achieving every rank prior to chief. The former chief released a statement Friday following his firing:

I am thankful for my colleagues at the Cincinnati Fire Department, my friends, and my family for supporting me throughout my 30 years of service to the City of Cincinnati. My time at the department has been one of my life's most rewarding experiences and I will forever be grateful for my chance to serve."

Assistant Fire Chief over the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Operations Division Steven Breitfelder has been named Interim Chief, effective immediately.



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